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GEORGE H. DUNNE

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Shepherds of the Church

JUSTUS GEORGE LAWLER

America and the Dream

JOHN P. SISK

The Court on Prayer

AN EDITORIAL

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THIS WEEK

EDITORIALS

387 The Court on Prayer
388 Smaller Bang for a Buck
389 Forward Together
389 Britain Strikes Back

ARTICLES, FEATURES

390 The Great Challenge
by James O'Gara

391 Italy's New Look
by George H. Dunne

394 Shepherds of the Church
by Justus George Lawler

397 America and the Dream
by John P. Sisk

VERSE

393 For My Last Anointing
by Raymond Roseliep

396 Elegy for James Thurber
by Thomas Merton

DEPARTMENTS

401 The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung

402 Books

THE COMMONWEAL

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

The Court on Prayer

WHATEVER ELSE it may mean, the Supreme Court decision in the New York school prayer case has made it patently clear that the relationship between religion and public life in the United States needs a thorough re-examination. More than that, the violent reaction to the decision has made it apparent that the nation as a whole is thoroughly muddled about the meaning of pluralism in our contemporary society. In the very narrow terms of the decision itself, the majority holding of the Court was neither radical nor strained. But in the broader implications of the decision, it raises serious questions about the place of religion in American life.

What, precisely, is the issue at stake? The first thing to be noted is the reaction to the decision. Almost without exception, those who opposed the decision have ignored the reasoning of the majority as expressed by Justice Black that ". . . it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as part of a religious program carried on by the government." One result of this evasion has been the reading of nightmarish implications into the ruling: that the cause of Communism has been served, that the Court has proclaimed secularism and that God has been banished from American society. There is nothing in the actual decision to support any of these conclusions.

It is equally unrealistic to proclaim that the decision was a great triumph for the principle of religious freedom. On the contrary, it has obviously offended the religious beliefs of a great number of Americans. The triumph of the minority's rights and sensibilities has, it seems, been achieved at the expense of the majority's.

The second thing to be noted is that the decision, with its attendant reception, points up very sharply the growing conflict between two major streams of contemporary American thought. One stream is that of a heightened national awareness of the rights and sensitivities of minority groups—an awareness reflected in the Court's recent civil liberties decisions. The other stream is that of a growing worry and concern about the inroads of secularism in America and the decrease in the influence of religion; for those so concerned, a reaffirmation of our religious traditions has been a minimal goal. The central weakness of the Court's decision was that it appeared to recognize only the first stream and not the other. The merit of Justice Stewart's dissent was in pointing out the Court's seeming obliviousness to tradition and practice.

Yet, for his part, Justice Stewart took no notice of an important point made by Justices Black and Douglas: that one main purpose of the no-establishment clause was to forestall the government's introducing religious divisiveness into society. As Mr. Douglas put it, "once government finances a religious exercise it inserts a divisive influence in our communities." The fact that ten parents brought suit to have the New York prayer banned is, in one sense, *prima facie* evidence that the prayer was divisive. To this one might add that the numerous practices Mr. Stewart adduces to support his dissent reflect, perhaps, the absence of a strong Jewish-secularist minority in our past history. Had this minority been stronger and as legally resourceful as it is today, these practices might not exist.

THE REAL issue at stake, however, is that of how we are to understand American pluralism. Is our pluralism to be understood only within the context of the American past—a context in which the Jew and the non-believer had little to do with the shaping of our national consensus? If so, then Justice Stewart's emphasis on traditional practices is perfectly germane and persuasive. If, however, there is some obligation to reckon with the rise of a large body of non-Christians, or even non-believers, then present realities will count for as much as past tra-

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ditions. In effect, the Court majority chose to let the present reality completely overrule tradition.

Unhappily, the Court implicitly did something more. It construed the no-establishment clause in such absolutist terms that any encouragement of religion appears to become illegal for the government and a hindrance to pluralism. Yet surely the Founding Fathers never had this intention. They wanted to protect religion from government control and the believer from coercion or pressure; it was never assumed that this could be done only by denying any and all believers the right to let their beliefs be publicly expressed.

To be sure, the Founding Fathers wanted the government to be neutral in its stance toward the various religions. But does neutrality necessarily entail the denial of the wishes of the majority to see the religious heritage of the nation recognized in an institution so vital as the public school? The heritage in question is not just the sum total of many private heritages. It is an American public heritage. The fact that a minority has arisen in this country which finds the expression of this heritage offensive does not annul its reality. For the court to ignore this reality is to be something less than neutral: in practice, the Court judged this reality and found it wanting in face of the complaints of a minority.

What is therefore most objectionable about the decision is its lack of subtlety and sensibility. It follows one line of constitutional thought out to its remotest extreme. What it does not recognize is that a viable Church-State decision must take into account more than just one line. It must take into account national tradition and common practice as well. It must show itself alert to the rights of minorities but also to the rights and beliefs of the majority. What made the 1954 segregation decision particularly notable was its rich-textured awareness of the interplay between constitutional rights and social realities. By comparison, the prayer decision is crude, legalistic and naive.

It is, finally, difficult to see how the decision can serve pluralism. It serves it only in the one sense that it bends over backwards to recognize the importance of a minority. A genuine pluralism must, however, recognize the importance of the majority too. The decision nakedly shows that the Court did not know how to recognize the rights of both at the same time; and the violent reaction to the decision shows that neither the majority or minority has much regard for the rights of the other. How the Court comes to resolve its dilemma will be crucial for the fate of religion in America. How the majority and minority come to adjudicate their counterclaims will be decisive for the future of American pluralism.

Smaller Bang for a Buck

UNACCOUNTABLY, Secretary of Defense McNamara's recent address on U.S. nuclear strategy has been rather neglected in our public prints. Everyone commented that his exposition of Administration defense policies was significant, but there has been little discussion of how and why it was significant.

A certain part of Mr. McNamara's speech, given as a commencement address, curiously enough, at the University of Michigan, was obviously aimed at President de Gaulle and his insistence that France develop an independent nuclear striking force. Naturally, it was news when the Secretary spelled out very firmly the United States' opposition to de Gaulle's plan, but the implications of Mr. McNamara's speech in terms of U.S. attitudes toward the use of our own nuclear weapons seem to us at least equally worthy of comment.

All in all, the Secretary's address impressed us as a rather hopeful document. In one sense, it is true, his explanation of Administration decisions regarding the use of nuclear weapons was somewhat chilling, perhaps because it was more explicit and more honest than such statements usually are. He affirmed, for instance, that our defense system was basically dependent upon the deterrence provided by the "balance of terror." While expressing his belief that nuclear attack would be "irrational," he nevertheless emphasized the real possibility of a nuclear disaster resulting from a mistake or misunderstanding, as well as downright irrationality. And while he declared that U.S. strategy, in the event of nuclear war, would be primarily to destroy the enemy's military forces, not his civilian population, Mr. McNamara also expressed our national intention "to destroy an enemy society if driven to it."

These statements put our nuclear dilemma in cruel, sharp focus—and the elements of that dilemma have been discussed in these pages too often to require their enumeration here—but Mr. McNamara's talk as a whole provides grounds for some

SUMMER SCHEDULE

In keeping with the usual practice, The Commonweal will again appear on alternate weeks from the middle of July to the middle of September. Forthcoming issues will be dated as follows: July 27, August 10, August 24, September 7 and September 21. From then on The Commonweal will resume its normal weekly printing schedule.

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cautious hope. Insofar as the Secretary's declaration of our defense strategy seems to accept the idea of the nuclear disaster with a certain equanimity, and insofar as it seems to believe that nuclear war can remain limited, it reflects an attitude to which we take strong exception; but it is also true that the whole tendency of Mr. McNamara's address is to reduce our dependence on nuclear weapons, to prevent the spread and multiplication of these weapons, to draw back from the doctrine of "massive retaliation."

While these intentions on the part of the Administration fail to take us very far in the solution of the nuclear quandary in which we find ourselves, they indicate at least a nuclear policy modification in the direction we firmly believe to be the right one. On the other hand, Mr. Eisenhower's recent complaint about the size of our defense budget expressed, we think, exactly the kind of thinking which has helped to produce the present nuclear terror. The former President charged that the Kennedy defense budget reflects "unjustified fears . . . outmoded concepts, and should be reduced."

In other words, Mr. Eisenhower has urged a return to the policy of hoping for the best, relying totally on the Bomb rather than expensive, difficult (i.e., "outmoded") conventional arms and, in the famous phrase, buying "a bigger bang for a buck." We thought it had been proved to the satisfaction of almost everyone that this policy was disastrous in the past and could only be more disastrous in the future. We are relieved that the Kennedy Administration is trying to move away from it.

Forward Together

IF ONE were making a list of half a dozen of the most pressing national needs, two would certainly be included: first, how to bring the force of religious conviction to bear on the achievement of interracial justice, and second, how to secure Protestant-Catholic-Jewish cooperation on civic and social questions. It is good, then, to be able to report that both objectives will be served by the convening in Chicago next January of a National Conference on Religion and Race.

Conveners of the meeting are the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches, the Social Action Commission of the Synagogue Council of America, and the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. More than forty Protestant, Jewish, Catholic and Orthodox groups are expected to participate. Preparations for the meeting are being handled by a sixty-member host committee, headed by three co-chairmen: Albert Cardinal Meyer, Archbishop of Chicago; Rabbi Ernst Lorge, President of the Chicago Board of Rabbis; and Mr. George F. Sisler, President of the Church Federation of Greater Chicago. The purpose of the Conference is "to bring the joint moral forces of the churches and the synagogues to bear on the problem of racial segregation."

In their joint letter of invitation, Cardinal Meyer, Rabbi Lorge and Mr. Sisler described the meeting in these terms: "This will be a historic meeting, unique in American life. It will mark the first time America's major religious groups have come together to counsel with one another on how religion can give greater leadership in the solution of one of our society's most crucial problems—the issue of race. It will dramatically demonstrate the relevance of religious values to the moral issues bound up in the evils of racial discrimination and segregation. The united religious concern evidenced in this meeting and its deliberations will, we feel sure, reach the hearts and the minds of our fellow Americans and kindle a light for the rest of the world."

Serving as secretariat for the host committee is the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago; for the Conference as a whole the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice at 21 West Superior Street, Chicago 10, Illinois. Already the National Conference of Religion and Race promises to be a major achievement. We congratulate those responsible for it.

Britain Strikes Back

ECHOES of FCC Chairman Newton Minow's charge that television represented a vast wasteland have just begun to die away here. Now Great Britain's eleven-member Pilkington Committee has reopened the entire subject by urging the virtual nationalization of the commercial section of British television. Most of the TV programs presented, the report said, are "vapid and puerile . . . derivative, repetitious and lacking in real substance," in contrast with those on the state-supported, non-commercial BBC, where "a sense of responsibility underlies the programming policies."

"Triviality," the British citizens' group said flatly, "is the natural vice of television." As for American TV, it recommended that inferior programs from the U.S. be completely eliminated from British television, not "as an expression of xenophobia but a condemnation of the poor quality of the product and of the values depicted by it." This, we can only conclude, is a British way of countering undeniable injury with understandable insult.

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The Great Challenge

A FEW WEEKS ago the acting Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant of Burma, outlined a program designed to produce a decade of development in the underdeveloped nations. As far as I can tell, the UN plan has aroused no great flurry of public interest, and it is not hard to see why.

The problem of the underdeveloped nations has been with us for a long time, and it will remain with us for decades to come. Given this fact, there is an understandable human tendency to be weary of hearing about it.

Another problem is our inclination to nominalism—to thinking that naming a problem somehow solves it. We have talked about the underdeveloped nations for years, while our actions have only nibbled at the edges of the problem. In a nation that does not like things to drag out, there is some tendency to grow impatient with a nagging question like this one, which comes up year after year but is never settled once and for all.

Finally, in spite of all the talk, I believe most Americans tend to underestimate the problem. We think of foreign aid for the underdeveloped nations as if it were like the aid given to the countries of Europe to rebuild after the war. Inevitably this approach makes us miss the true dimensions of the crisis in the underdeveloped countries.

The countries of Europe were badly hit by the war, and many of the great industrial plants were flattened. But Europe was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, and the potential for quick revival was always there. Technological ability was part of the culture, trained personnel were available, and "simple" skills like reading and writing were taken for granted in the labor force.

No such situation prevails in the underdeveloped areas of the world. There, nations whose social and economic systems are still feudal try desperately to take a giant step into the twentieth century. In these lands men have learned one lesson: that it really is not necessary to live and die in hunger. This knowledge is revolutionizing the world, and today the leaders of these nations are trying to achieve in decades what Europe took centuries to accomplish. The task is not impossible, but no one should imagine that it will be easy.

The question of population growth is an important factor here. Since World War II the benefits of the Western technological revolution have reached the underdeveloped regions in one crucial way, in the shape of improved sanitation and health facilities. The use of DDT alone, for example, has virtually eliminated malaria from some of these regions, and as a result millions are alive today who would otherwise be dead. But if they are to stay alive they have to eat, and this is the rub. Introducing mosquito control is not too hard, but transforming primitive agricultural and economic systems takes some doing. A lag is inevitable, and this is the story today, as population growth threatens to outrun gains in production.

The underdeveloped nations desperately need to expand their productive capacities. This means more capital investment. Generally speaking, it takes a $3 capital investment to increase annual output by $1. If a nation's population is growing at the rate of 2% (Latin America is already growing at a rate of 2½% annually), this means that 6% of its annual income must be saved and invested each year, not to expand but just to stand still, and this in nations where the annual per capita income may well be less than $100 annually.

In this sense countries like India and China face exactly the same problem. Each has a rapidly expanding population; each is trying to modernize agriculture and to develop industry. Both of these steps require heavy capital investment, in education as well as in more obvious things like heavy equipment, fertilizer plants, etc. The difference is that China is sweating capital investment out of a starving peasantry by totalitarian control; India is still dedicated to development by means compatible with a free society.

As a consequence, it is just impossible for a nation like India to make this leap across the centuries without the introduction of capital from the outside. Indeed, under the most favorable conditions it will take the best efforts of the West and of the underdeveloped nations themselves to win the race against time. Alone, these nations can never make it.

What the UN seeks is an annual increase of 5% in the national economies of the underdeveloped nations. This would mean an increase in individual income of 2% for every inhabitant—little enough when people earn less than $100 a year. No exact price-tag can yet be put on the program, but it is estimated that Western nations would have to agree to long-term aid to the underdeveloped nations at a rate roughly equivalent to 1% of their national incomes annually.

If past experience is any guide, this proposal will be enough to give a good many American and European conservatives apoplexy. As far as I am concerned, though, I have no doubt that Christian duty and national self-interest both urge us to back the UN program enthusiastically. Indeed, my only fear is that the program proposed is still not adequate to the size of the problem we face. JAMES O'GARA

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Christian Democrats and the Left

Italy's New Look

GEORGE H. DUNNE

ON MARCH 10 of this year, the new government formed by Christian Democrat Amintore Fanfani won the confidence of the chamber of deputies by the substantial margin of 295 votes to 195, with 83 abstentions. The following week it received a similarly comforting endorsement from the senate. Voting against the government were the Communists together with all the right-wing parties: the Liberals, Monarchists, Neofascists. Voting to support the government were the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats, the Republicans. Not voting at all were the Socialists. By not voting they were in effect supporting the government, for it was Socialist abstention that guaranteed the substantial margin by which the government survived the test.

In his speech to the chamber announcing his party's policy, Socialist leader Pietro Nenni made it clear that the fact of support did not indicate an alliance. "The conditions for a political alliance of the Socialists and the Christian Democrats and for the organic participation of the Socialists in the new majority and the new government do not exist," he said. Nevertheless, he gave strong assurances that his party would give positive, and not merely negative, support to the specific legislative measures proposed by the government to implement its program of social and economic reform.

This is the element which gives an entirely new look to Italian politics. Today a government is in power with the support of the Socialist party. Since May 1947, when De Gasperi drove both them and the Communists out of the post-war coalition government, the Socialists have been in opposition. In their opposition they have moved side by side and in step with the Communists. In October 1956, the Socialist party signed a kind of consultative agreement with the Communist party.

Now the Socialist party gives—and a government accepts—its support. Thus has been brought about a resolution of the famous debate about the "opening to the left" around which for some nine years all political discussion in Italy has tended to polarize. What has led to this development?

FATHER GEORGE H. DUNNE, S.J., a long-time contributor to these pages, is the author of the recently published *Generation of Giants* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press).

Until 1953, it will be remembered, the Christian Democratic party controlled an absolute majority of votes. The crisis which finally reached its climax on March 10 of this year began when an electoral reform measure, which had been expected to strengthen the party, contrary to expectations weakened it. Since then, while always the largest single party, the Christian Democrats have never been able to capture enough votes to assure a majority in parliament. Consequently, they have been forced to rely upon the parliamentary support of two and sometimes three of the small parties in order to form a government. In 1954 and again in 1956 the C.D. formed a coalition government with the Social Democrats and the Liberals, with the negative support, i.e., abstention, of the Republicans. In 1958, following general elections, it formed a coalition government with the Social Democrats and the Republicans. In 1959 it formed a government with the support of the Liberals and Monarchists. When the Liberals withdrew their support a long governmental crisis followed, ending finally with the formation of a Christian Democratic government supported by the Social Democrats, Republicans and Liberals. This government fell when the Social Democrats and the Republicans withdrew their support.

Even this brief recitation suggests the almost desperate plight of a party by far the largest in the country, but not quite large enough to control and obliged to depend upon various and sometimes contradictory combinations in order to govern. The Liberal party, for instance, is a right of center group which attracts business men, looks with jaundiced eye upon government activity in the economic field, but, unlike American Republicans, believes strongly in centralized government. On the other hand, both the Social Democratic and the Republican parties are left of center and, in most domestic policies, are at odds with the Liberals. Furthermore, these are all small parties, each controlling only a few seats in parliament, so that even when combined their votes give the Christian Democrats only a thin margin of strength in any crucial test of confidence.

SINCE THE war, Italy has staged an extraordinary economic recovery, rivaling that of West Germany There have remained major problems, however, some

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of which have only been intensified by this booming prosperity. Most of the expansion has been confined to the great urban centers in the north, and the post-war boom has only made more glaring the contrast between northern prosperity and the relative poverty of the south. Nor has the prosperity been felt in the agricultural sector. Most of Italy's peasants are not land-owners, but sharecroppers. The fact that they are witnesses to the prosperity around them, but do not share in it themselves, only makes their poverty more painful and, in part accounts for the fact that in the rural areas of otherwise prosperous northern provinces, such as Tuscany, the Communists find some of their strongest support.

There are other urgent problems also to be dealt with, among them that of regional autonomy, promised in the constitution, but except for Sicily never realized; the problem of administrative decentralization and reform; the problem of guaranteeing private initiative while at the same time orienting and integrating it with public initiative. In the view of the Christian Democrats, with some dissenters in the right wing of the party, the solution of these problems requires programming, planning, and bold action by the government.

But the fundamental problem is that it is extremely difficult, has in fact been proved impossible, for a government to carry out any effective and far-reaching program so long as it has so thin a margin of support to rely upon, especially when this support depends upon the votes of parties which are far apart in their social programs. Measures proposed by the Christian Democratic party and supported by the Social Democrats, for example, will not be acceptable to the Liberal party. The result is that the government is forced to remain at dead center, unable to move without losing the votes of one or the other of the supporting parties.

Because of this, Republicans, Social Democrats, and certain of the Christian Democrats have for years been urging that an attempt be made to move the government off this dead center by seeking the support of the Socialists, by making, in the accepted phrase, "an opening to the left." The theory has also been described as one of "enlarging the democratic camp" to include the Socialist party. The right-wing parties and strong elements of the Christian Democratic party have opposed this on the ground that the Socialist party by reason of its close working relationship with the Communist party did not qualify for inclusion in the democratic camp. While the argument has gone on ever since 1953, this has been the official position of the Christian Democratic party. As late as October 1959 the C.D. at its national congress in Florence explicitly rejected the "opening to the left."

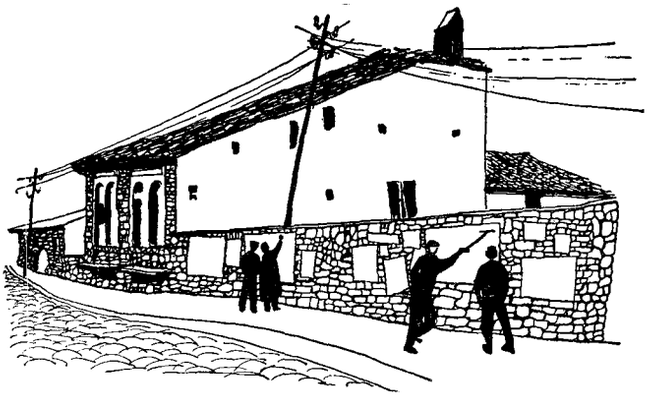
This February, however, at its national congress in Naples, the party reversed itself and authorized its leaders to make the "opening to the left." The switch was not accomplished without strong and even bitter opposition, although those in opposition have pledged their support for the sake of unity. Whether this unity can be maintained will depend upon how the policy works. It is interesting that the chief architect of the *volte-face* was Aldo Moro, C.D. party secretary, who two years earlier in Florence had been the chief architect of the contrary policy.

WHAT HAS happened during these two years to bring about the abandonment of the long prevailing position? Probably a growing sense of the urgency of doing something to halt the not great but slow attrition of Christian Democratic voting strength and the not great but steady increase in Communist voting strength. This trend requires a positive and bold attack upon the social and economic problems which, unsolved, provide effective material among the disaffected poor for Communist propaganda.

Also contributing to the decision was the conviction of many that the best way, in fact the only way, to wean the Socialist party away from the Communist alliance would be to accept it into the camp of democratic parties. Those who opposed the opening to the left argued that the Socialists first had to break this alliance before their support could be accepted by honestly democratic parties. Those who advocated the opening to the left argued that admitting the Socialists into the democratic camp would itself weaken and in the end break the alliance.

The Socialist party itself has not given any of the guarantees which have long been demanded of it as a pre-condition to being received into the camp of democracy. To be realistic about it, Nenni could not give such guarantees without splitting his own party, something any politician, whatever his coloration, avoids like the plague. At least a third of Nenni's party would refuse to follow him in any formal repudiation of the Communist party. As a matter of fact, well over a third of his national council voted against adopting the policy of support which Nenni on March 10 pledged to the new government.

It is possible, of course, that C.D. party secretary



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Moro knows things about Nenni's inner thoughts which are not known to the public. It is possible that Nenni has privately given assurances which he could not possibly give publicly and that it is upon such private information that the confidence of advocates of the opening to the left rests.

This confidence is, of course, not shared by opponents of the policy. Says Malagodi, secretary of the Liberal party: "Whoever sits at table with Nenni eats communist minestrone, and the length or shape of the spoon does not change the ingredients or the taste of the soup." Says Scelba, one of the leaders of the Christian Democratic party: "The fundamental [objection to the opening to the left] remains, in my opinion, the fact of continued Socialist party ties with the Communist party in local administrations of cities, provinces, regions, and in labor unions and other economic institutions, ties which are not calculated to isolate Communism, which is [alleged to be] the purpose of the opening to the left."

THE CATHOLIC hierarchy has also consistently opposed the opening to the left and has been one of the chief factors in blocking this move in the past. Its right to take this position is beyond doubt. The means it has sometimes used to accomplish its ends may, however, be questioned. The hierarchy fears that accepting the support of the Socialists will strengthen, rather than weaken, the Marxist forces on the extreme left. This judgment may prove to be correct, but it may also prove to be incorrect. It is a political, not a moral, judgment.

There is nothing in either theology or in history to justify the view that the hierarchy is endowed with any special gift of political intuition. Theologically, there is Christ's admonition about leaving the things that are Caesar's to Caesar. Historically, while some popes and some bishops have on occasion shown themselves politically astute, others have committed serious political blunders. Who in the retrospect of history, for example, could possibly deny that the *non expedit* policy which directed Catholics not to participate in politics was a grievous error in political judgment? Neither in France nor in Italy has the Church fully recovered from the damage wrought by this policy in years past.

While, therefore, cardinals, bishops and priests have no less a right than other citizens to urge their views, there is reason for serious concern when they attempt to impose their views as matters of conscience. To argue that the decision made at Naples was badly advised and dangerous and that it will strengthen the forces of Marxism is one thing. To speak of "the great disobedience of Naples" is quite another thing. This tendency, which has manifested itself repeatedly in Italy in recent years, to assert a power to engage the consciences of Catholics in obedience to the political judgments of bishops, is anything but reassuring.

WILL THE opening to the left succeed? How long will the Socialists support the government? Will the Christian Democrats be able to maintain their unity? Will the new government be able to launch an effective program? If it does, will this weaken the Communist voting strength? Will it strengthen the support of the democratic parties? Will it drive a wedge between the Socialists and the Communists? These are questions no one can answer with certainty, but everyone from far right to far left awaits with mingled hope and fear the answers which the future will give, hoping what others fear and fearing what others hope.

It is indeed a great gamble and for high stakes. *Il giocco si fa grosso.* In view of the failure of the Italian electorate to give the Christian Democrats a commanding control of parliament, it is difficult not to feel that the gamble had sooner or later to be made. Everyone who has the interests of democracy at heart must hope that it will succeed.

For My Last Anointing

i

Oil my eyes creaky
as the church door and these pet
bones to be unhinged

Knocking for Jacob
pour oil on my ears' troubled
waters of Sichar

Squeeze olive tingle
at the nostril rim given
to circling what groves

Ooze wet to the lips
unsealing 'kisses sealed in
vain' in young man time

By my rocky hand
start a lavabo flowing
clearer than eggwhite

My feet skin (run out,
bedded) soak and rubdown with
balm of the athlete

ii

Tack a T shaped twig
on the air hooking my T
shirt and my soul there

RAYMOND ROSELIEP

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Laymen and the Council

Shepherds of the Church

JUSTUS GEORGE LAWLER

THE SPIRIT of reform and renewal in the Church has been profoundly stimulated by the preparatory work for the coming Council. The atmosphere is considerably clearer now than it was a decade ago when so masterful a work as Congar's *Vraie et fausse réforme* was withdrawn from circulation. Since Catholicism is an incarnational faith which must at once embrace the contingent multiplicity of history while remaining faithful to its own inner spiritual unity, the difficulties in every reform or renewal are the same as those encountered in any human act. "How shall we know the dancer from the dance?" asked the poet; how shall we live the changless principles in a world of change? How shall we move in this world in harmonic response to the choreography of the other world?

What, in the light of this new spirit of reform, does one expect from the second Vatican Council? I would suggest that we anticipate a strong impulse to be given to the entire awakening which the Christian community has experienced in the last fifty years.

This is a new theological era, Father William Lynch and others have declared; this does not mean there is a "new theology" in the pejorative sense. All theology is new: the Sacrament makes present; *now* is the acceptable time. And in point of fact the "new theological age" is no longer new in terms of chronology. For we are moving into the second stage of the modern Church, in which the achievements of the post-Vatican—and more definitely, the achievements of the post-Modernist—period will be coordinated, sheared of their extravagances, and given a new propulsion, a new energy: a stage in which the goal shall remain, as Blondel wrote to von Huegel, "not to metamorphose the traditional data but to deepen them."

Even in their American setting, religious doctrine and practice are moving towards a moment of synthesis. The liturgical revival, which in the hands of some of its more extreme partisans has occasionally appeared excessively taken up with group or mass participation is now emphasizing the need for that communion which Newman defined as "alone with the Alone," and which has recently been stressed in the Maritains' little book on prayer and contemplation. Theology for the laity is becoming a genuinely theological discipline, truly illuminated by the revolutionary advances being made in Scripture studies, and is no longer identified with the catechism-cum-metaphysics program of *A Companion to the Summa,* or with the retrogressive homeward-looking angelism of the recent compendium, *Theology in the Catholic College.*

Under the influence of kerygmatic catechetics the whole field of religious education from the primary grades up is being renovated. The "lay apostolate" is acquiring a fluidity of approach radically different from the rigid framework of its early days when European cadres of action were imported injudiciously, when such rudimentary notions as "think-judge-act" were subjected to a kind of rabbinic exegesis, and when the place of the Sodality in "Catholic Action" was a topic of urgent debate among our American "militants." One awaits, then, from the Council a summation and a clarification of the efforts of the last half century.

WHAT MIGHT be hoped for from this Council—and I speak under correction and, of course, only for myself—is primarily not radical changes in the Church's organizational structure nor the resolution of a number of controverted questions of theology; as at Trent the guiding principle should be: "It is sufficient that the Council condemn the heresies, without judging all the disputes of the Schools." Certainly we await few definitions of doctrine in the strict sense, and we would expect whatever definitions may eventuate to be concerned with questions of the greatest *present* urgency.

The intellectual heirs of Veuillot and W. G. Ward are still active and still pressing for pronouncements on a multitude of questions. To these twentieth-century successors of the ultramontanists, we would say with Newman: "When has definition of doctrine *de fide* been a luxury of devotion and not a stern painful necessity?"

There is one specific area where there is a strong expectation of doctrinal pronouncements which shall complement those of the first Vatican Council, and which shall manifest that personal interpenetration of the two orders of the contingent and the absolute which is at the core of any lasting reform. At Vatican I the first

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constitution, *Pastor Aeternus,* on the papal primacy had been the subject of much discussion; the second constitution, *De Ecclesia Christi,* could not be taken up because of the dissolution of the Council. There is every reason to believe that this tract will be re-examined at Vatican II in the light of developments during the past ninety years. And in that light one can expect that certain topics which were to have been debated in 1870, such as the role of the episcopate and the place of the laity, will be clarified.

In that deepening and freshening of our comprehension of traditional beliefs, which will be the goal of the coming Council, the insights of the present moment of history will be invaluable. The whole drift of modern thought is away from the mechanistic orientation of the last three hundred years; and this personalist tenor has been reinforced by contemporary theological developments. The Church is not now envisioned primarily as an organizational entity, nor is the bishop regarded as some kind of ecclesiastical manager.

Even that sacrament which lends itself most readily to being defined in juridic terms, Penance, has been shown by Adrienne von Speyr's *Die Beichte* to entail a personal encounter with the life of the Trinity. The insights of existentialism, of the meeting of the "self with the other," of the "I and thou," have been confirmed both in the doctrine of the Mystical Body and in the notion of Christ as the archetype of the sacraments.

I AM IN no way qualified to discuss how these various renewed insights will affect the theology of the episcopal state, but speaking as a layman, I do feel there will be consequences in the practical order of such a theological formulation which ought to be examined. First, one would expect the cardinalate to be reduced to a purely curial or honorary status (as presently with papal chamberlains), and the election of the Chief Bishop to be confined exclusively to certain bishops representing the episcopate of the whole Church.

That an accident of medieval polity affecting the ancient see of Rome could in the twentieth century result in the election of the supreme teacher by members of the Church-taught is to depreciate both symbolically and in fact the episcopal college. How such a reform would be implemented is a minor consideration: possibly primatial sees, or—where none exists as in this country—major dioceses would have attached to them the right of voting in the conclave.

Second, the legal fiction of "titular" bishops could be discontinued. Auxiliary bishops now function mainly as subordinate governing officials or as ministers of Confirmation; but since the episcopal state is not primarily an administrative office, and since Confirmation need not be conferred by a bishop, this notion of a "titular" bishop reduces the episcopal consecration to a kind of honorific. One remedy would be to allow lesser prelates to act as the bishop's auxiliaries, or—the preferable solution—to break up the larger dioceses so that titular bishops, unless coadjutors, could govern their own sees; the present meaningless situation in which a bishop may be pastor of a local parish could thus be terminated.

Finally, the essence of the episcopal office will be clarified. According to one of the best commentaries on ecclesiastical law (Abbo and Hannan) the common opinion of canonists is that the bishop should be more skilled in canon law than learned in theology. This judgment may indicate special pleading on the part of canonists, but one suspects rather that its general acceptance is an effect of that denigration of the episcopate which Cardinal Manning in his later years decried as "Catholic presbyterianism." The bishop becomes in that misconception not a teacher in his own right, but merely the emissary of the Pope. And through this distortion of traditional teaching, he becomes in this country the victim of those arrogant attacks on the "Roman hierarchy" as the "Vatican foreign services," which still emanate from Protestants and Others and from the half-lights of the Beacon Press.

But these attacks may be as much the result of the failure of theologians to explicate Catholic teaching as of prejudice on the part of non-Catholics. For Catholic teaching affirms that the bishop is not the Pope's vicar, much less his ambassador: he is the one teacher of his *ecclesia,* and as a member of the episcopal college he is a teacher of the universal Church in union with its Chief Bishop.

ONE MIGHT further suggest that it has been this notion of the bishop as an interpreter of the law rather than as a teacher of doctrine which accounts for the not infrequent silence of some bishops on pressing social and ethical issues, such as desegregation and disarmament. If the bishop is the chief teacher of Christian truth, he is also its chief witness; but if he is regarded as an interpreter of the law, his proper domain is jurisprudence, not testimony to truth.

It is not desirable to discount any claims of prudence; but to make them the overriding consideration, and to define the episcopal office in terms of them, may tend to induce a muteness that occasionally verges on the scandalous. The "church of silence" is not always behind the iron curtain.

Furthermore a witness is a martyr. This martyrdom may not be a murder in the cathedral; it may take the more harrowing form of public criticism, as it did recently in New Orleans; it may take the form of the antagonism of some of the bishop's brethren; it may take the form—as it did in more than a few instances at the time of Vatican I—of rebuke by the Pope; or it may take the form of loss of one's see, as in a notable case in this hemisphere. But may not this be the price

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of accepting the plenitude of the priesthood, and of being the successor of the apostles?

However, it must be said in all fairness that the American church has been blessed with bishops who for the most part were sympathetic to the legitimate aspirations of the community, and who, particularly from the time of Gibbons and Ireland, have identified themselves with the cause of social justice. Unfortunately in recent decades these were often causes initiated outside the Church, and the hierarchy merely gave its approbation to movements already sanctioned by public opinion. This tended to confirm in the non-Catholic mind the crude maxim that, "The Vatican always follows the election returns." But at least our bishops have never been mere ceremonial functionaries: they could not be described, to use Monsignor Duchesne's mordant phrase, as "mitred sacristans."

There have been eminent theologians and humanists among them, such as the two Kenricks and Spalding of Peoria. And coming from the ranks of the middle-class, they have very rarely been intent on that social display enshrined in Archbishop Seton's monument to ecclesiastical snobbism, *Memories of Many Years;* nor have they been afflicted with that passion for personal aggrandizement which led Léon Bloy to observe of an eminent prelate: "The Cardinal had a heart of gold. Solid gold."

But one regrets having to state that the bishops have not always exercised that leadership which their personal qualities, their educational training, and their consecration authorized. This failure has stemmed both from that lack of "self-knowledge" which the truncated theology of 1870 induced, and from the same difficulties of articulation and communication that beset the heads of all large institutions and corporations: they are faced with the problem of keeping in vital contact with all the echelons of their organization.

IT IS HERE that the layman plays an indispensable role. Some formalized instrument ought to be established so that the bishop, who necessarily moves in a circle of high public officials, and of people of wealth and power, may hear the word of the layman, and may encounter through him the issues before the mass of the Christian community. I say "formalized instrument" because the present make-shift arrangement of communion breakfasts or Holy Name affairs or semi-solemn receptions, or even the presence of the layman on the staffs of some diocesan papers, is much too indirect and haphazard to result in any real communication.

There is a parallel to the kind of formal institution of the dialogue, which I am suggesting, in the quinquennial assemblies at which the bishops gathered with the lower clergy in the church of France before the revolution—the gap between bishop and clergy at that period being greater than the gap between hiearchy and laity in the present age. One would like, for instance, to see the layman represented at the meetings of the N.C.W.C. or at diocesan synods: and this, not merely as the spokesman of the present narrow conception of the "lay apostolate," but as the voice of all the interests and hopes of the Church, as seen from the vantage of the lay state.

Such a move might entail stripping away some of the vestigial protocol and panoply that now encumber the bishop in the exercise of his office. And it means that the layman's testimony is not always going to be couched in diplomatic niceties. The layman must speak vigorously and clearly; indeed, this vigor and clarity are the outward signs of his inward commitment to the cause of the Church in the temporal order, and they ought not to be interpreted as indications of a lack of obedience or docility.

From the viewpoint of doctrine the bishop's role is primarily "preceptive," that is, the bishop is first of all a teacher. But his role is also "receptive," that is, the bishop must "consult" the faithful. Newman certainly over-emphasized this "consultation," but nevertheless he was nearer to the authentic tradition than such contemporary theologians as Franzelin who regarded the faithful as simply the passive mirrors of official teaching. The layman must take an active part in the elucidation of doctrine and morality, and he is obliged to proffer his testimony even if it is ignored or if the only apparent response it elicits is a reprimand for effrontery and lack of "respect."

The bishop is a pontiff: a builder of bridges. One of the bridges that the forthcoming Council of the bishops should repair is that between hierarchy and laity. This can be accomplished only after there has been elaborated a genuine theology of the episcopal office and of the lay state.

Elegy for James Thurber

Thurber, they have come, the secret bearers,
At the right time, though fools seem to have won.
Business and generals survive you
At least for one brief day.

Humor is now totally abolished.
The great dogs of nineteen sixty one
Are nothing to laugh at.

Leave us, good friend. Leave our awful celebration
With pity and relief.
You are not called to solemnize with us
Our final madness.

You have not been invited to hear
The last words of everybody.

THOMAS MERTON

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Theory vs. Fact

America and the Dream

JOHN P. SISK

AMERICA being the land of promise, it follows that one of our favorite pastimes is the discovery of the gap between the promise, the dream, the theory of America and the day-to-day, living fact of it. Therefore little of our literature, popular or serious, is without its exposé, muckraking or true-confession elements. As one veil of illusion after another is stripped away, a detached observer might even get the impression that the American public gets a masochistic pleasure out of being confronted with its failures, delusions and misconceptions.

Basically, however, we are still too serious about the dream and the promise to have much leisure for the pleasures of perversity. Our tendency rather is to proceed too quickly from exposé to reform—to free the slaves, to prohibit the hooch, to investigate the chiselers or to flush the comsymps out of high places. The muckrakers who goad us into action may too often be short-sighted sentimentalists, self-deluded power-seekers or hypocritical profiteers, which is a bad thing; but it would be a worse thing if suddenly they no longer had a market. For it would probably mean not that we had learned to live with our limitations and had accepted ourselves as something less than God's fair-haired darlings, but that we had simply given up.

The occasion of these remarks is four books which, different as they otherwise are, have in common a concern with the disparity between fact and fiction, reality and dream in American life. For instance, in *Is Anybody Happy* (Doubleday, $4.50) Norman M. Lobsenz attempts to show that in America "enjoyment is increasingly elusive at the very moment that it appears, superficially, to be everywhere for the asking." We think we are happy because we are rich and have much leisure; we think we like leisure and that a shortening of the work week will mean more leisure; we think more leisure means more cultural activities; we think we get a kick out of our pleasures and that they relax us; we are convinced that if we combine play with work our work will be less boring, etc. But all too often, Mr. Lobsenz argues, the very opposite is the case; leisure and affluence only give greater range to our boredom; in our fear of leisure we fill it up with part-time jobs; we give our free time over to frivolity rather than cultural activities; our recreations tense us up and wear us out; by mixing work and play we only take the fun out of play.

In *More Sacred Cows* (William Morrow, $3.75) Anthony Standen ranges much more widely than Mr. Lobsenz as he notes the disparity between what we think we are or think we are doing and what we really are or are really doing. The educative system we think is so democratic is actually very discriminatory, especially towards Catholics and a minority of Protestants and Jews; the war with Russia that we call cold and political is really cold and religious; the capitalistic system which seems to us such a model of efficiency is full of wasteful duplication; we think of ourselves as the open-handed benefactors of foreign countries when in reality we are exploiting them; we pride ourselves on our tolerance, but too often our tolerance is only our refusal of love; we profess to be against the meddling of government in free enterprise, yet we are quite happy to let it meddle when the meddling makes it possible for business and industry to act without regard for social consequences.

TO PASS from Mr. Standen's essays to W. Lloyd Warner's *American Life: Dream and Reality* (The University of Chicago Press, $6.50) is to assume a cooler and more restricted view of our culture. Mr. Warner (who has also written the "Yankee City" series) is a highly regarded cultural anthropologist, and as such is disposed to see not heresies but disparities. He reveals plenty of the latter: what we think of as rationally ordered ceremonies turn out to be religious rituals; while our upper class is officially democratic and egalitarian, in its behavior and values it is aristocratic; though we sing the praises of upward mobility for all, the fact is that for many it has become an empty phrase; we say that the poor have equal opportunity with the rich in school, but the educative system tends to keep the lower classes down; we believe that the upper-middle class is the joiner-class but the upper class outjoins it—and thereby keeps the reins of power in its hands.

"The problem of the social scientist," writes Mr.

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Warner, "is not the false one usually posed of how humans become social beings, but rather how they learn to become autonomous individuals." This is also the problem of the American writer, who so characteristically retells the story of the individual's battle with society. It is John Pairman Brown's version of this battle in his *The Displaced Person's Almanac* (Beacon, $3.50) that makes it such an American book. The displaced person is, of course, excellently located to observe the disparity between professed beliefs or ideals and actual conduct. Thus Mr. Brown is struck with the extent to which our professed Christianity is a sham, the Church is run by company-men who protect the faithful from Christ, and our material wealth and military might hide from us our moral and spiritual decay. We never tire of extolling nature, yet everywhere we are contaminating it; we say we are peace-loving, yet our real values inevitably make us war-mongers; we profess the noblest concern for our fellow men while persisting in a course of action that may result in the extermination of millions of them; we think we are a nation of individualists when really we are the frightened conformists of a mass culture.

Superficially, the organizing factor in Mr. Brown's book is the zodiac with its twelve conventional signs. Actually, as we proceed from Libra back to Libra, we read thirteen moody and highly literate ruminations on the world that Mr. Brown never made and which in great part he thoroughly disapproves of. He is one of the latest voices in the great line of displaced persons that include Thoreau, Eric Gill, E. E. Cummings, Leon Bloy, Henry Miller and D. H. Lawrence. "All the modern sort get their real kick out of killing the old human feeling out of a man, making mincemeat out of the old Adam and the old Eve," Lawrence has his gamekeeper say to Connie Chatterly. Mr. Brown might differ with Lawrence on many issues but not this one. For him as for all displaced persons in our culture the evil is the over-organization—in church, in society, in government—that alienates man from his own person and from nature, subordinates him to machinery and merges him in the vulgar mass.

Displaced persons tend to be religious but in an eccentric and anarchistic fashion. Mr. Brown for all his black doubts is a religious man. His quarrel with the Church has all the bitterness of a lovers' quarrel. Therefore he has "found a semi-furnished room in one of its smaller mansions" where, though he proposes to stay till he is kicked out, he "won't take more than a certain amount of guff from the management."

ANTHONY STANDEN, in *More Sacred Cows*, is a religious man, too, but he is no displaced person; in fact, one gets the impression that his religion keeps him from being one, just as it keeps him from being overwhelmed by the disparities around him. He takes the line of reason and common sense; his aim is to reduce heresy to orthodoxy, but he is sufficiently aware of "the fundamentally different ways in which human beings can live" not to confuse orthodoxy with conformism. He also knows how easily in this relativist world, where one man's orthodoxy is another man's heresy, Christian common sense itself is mistaken for heresy. Surely his advice not to export capitalism "unless we are able to mix with it a considerable dose of *Rerum Novarum*" will be heresy to many of his readers.

Norman Lobsenz, author of *Is Anybody Happy*, may be a religious man but he has not seen his subject in a religious perspective, as it needs to be seen if one really wishes to get to the bottom of it. There is religion in Mr. Warner's book, *America Life: Dream and Reality*, but it is there as a specimen to be observed. Thus he writes: "The beliefs in the gods and the symbolic rites which celebrate their divinity are no more than men collectively worshiping their own images." He is perfectly aware of the structural utility of religion to society, however: that is the specimen in action. In the anthropological view religion is not unrelated in its social utility to a radio soap opera like "Big Sister," about which Mr. Warner observes: "Although artistically the program was dull and unexciting, it did perform social and psychological functions for the mass of women who are a large and important segment of the social life of America."

I do not wish to argue a connection between religion and style, but I will note for what it is worth that only in Mr. Standen's and Mr. Brown's books does one get the sense of being addressed by an individual person. No one would call Mr. Standen a great stylist; he is too easily satisfied with the available, familiar expression and has an irritating habit of using colloquial exclamations. But there is a genuinely personal quality in his book that I found attractive. It sounds like a man talking, which, according to Mr. Brown, is the only way for a book to sound.

As for Mr. Brown himself, he is a pure delight to read, even when one disagrees with him. It is necessary to bring to his prose the imaginative concentration one brings to poetry. Like the metaphysical poets he so frequently recalls, his habit is to bring together with

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wit and passion and in a clarifying relationship persons, objects and events normally kept far apart. For instance, of patchwork reforms in the Church he says: "Every little dab of expediency just makes more dirty dishes in the end. We aren't going to get anywhere until we've salvaged the sterling spoon from the kitchen midden of old Coke bottles, Sunday supplements, eggshells, grapefruit-rinds we've piled on top of it."

THERE IS nothing like this in Mr. Lobsenz' book, nor is there anything especially distinctive about Mr. Lobsenz' style. It is adequate for his view of the subject—a view from which one would hardly expect a witty and passionate discovery of the unexpected connection. Mr. Brown's style might make it possible for him to speak his mind on Mr. Lobsenz' subject in a single intense and gnomic essay, the ideological structure of which would be theological. Such an essay would ignore as obvious or peripheral much of what Mr. Lobsenz needs if he is to make a book out of his subject. The general reader may wisely prefer Mr. Lobsenz' style not only because it reveals a view of the subject already in the common domain but because it protects him from the revelations of Mr. Brown's style.

Mr. Warner's style is the scientific, specimen-observer's style and is designed to protect the observer from involvements or discoveries irrelevant or dangerous to his special interest. Ultimately, then, Mr. Warner's style—it is actually quite clear and direct with a minimum of jargon—protects him too from the revelations of Mr. Brown's intensely personal and poetic style.

Mr. Brown, on the other hand, might see Mr. Warner's style as the identifying mantle of the Enemy whose appalling power over nature is in direct ratio to its restricted view. What haunts Mr. Brown's mind is not only the possibility of nuclear holocaust but the Faustean audacity that makes the human race forget its "holy fear of messing around with forces that don't belong to it." When one is under the spell of Mr. Brown's style it is easy to see the extent to which scientific style is both cause and effect of man's hubristic aspiration to know too much and reach out too far. For Mr. Brown as for E. E. Cummings it is better to "learn from one bird how to sing/ Than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance." Therefore his hero is Prospero "who got rid of his magic book in time."

But the Brown style for all its moody, imaginative penetration is itself dangerously restricting. The advantage of his style (and it is a great one) is that it enables one to see the extent to which, as Thoreau puts it, "Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths." The view of life it makes possible resembles the view from St. Simeon Stylites' pillar or Olliver Mellors' cottage or Henry Miller's jet plane. At such detached points of vantage one can ask the questions that must be asked. Why get excited about the transatlantic cable, Thoreau asks, when it will only be used to transmit the usual trivialities? Has machinery really done the human race any good? asks Lawrence. "Is there any point in attaining such awesome speed?" asks Henry Miller as, forty thousand feet in the air, he dreams of standing still like the hummingbird. Why act as if the progress of science were a fated thing that man must not even dream of managing in his own interest? asks Mr. Brown.

STILL, THE clarity of view that makes these questions possible is in relation to its selectivity, and to give the answer the questioner wants is to accept his reductive and generally heroically disjunctive standards. "A man had better starve at once than lose his innocence in the process of getting his bread," says Thoreau, and unless you read this as a hyperbolic warning that acquisitiveness leads to corruption you may soon find yourself believing that all bread comes from corrupted effort. Similarly, if you take Mr. Brown literally when (recalling Emerson and Shelley) he accuses the Church of having stripped Christ's life of its meaning and fossilized it into creeds, you may soon come to suspect that any attempt to make the meaning of Jesus' life continually available by institutionalizing it is evil. The conventional devil is as omnipresent as Emerson says he is, but it is no less true that the devil runs rampant where there are no conventions. Perhaps Mr. Brown's own protection against the potential extremity of his position (after all, if he is a romantic he is not a romantic pantheist) is that "semi-furnished room in one of the smaller mansions."

In our own time one of the most serious inadequacies in the view from St. Simeon's pillar is its lack of sympathy for the whole prudential, quotidian management of life. Mr. Standen has this sympathy. Therefore, though he is aware of the corruptions of politics he knows that to despair of politics is to despair of civilization. Implicit in Mr. Warner's utilitarian view of his specimen is the assumption that politics, like soap opera and religion, is indispensible to the social organism.

But what overwhelms Mr. Brown, and indeed most displaced persons, is the superficial, hypocritical, temporizing, short-sighted and thoroughly materialistic nature of most political action. The prospect of having to rely on political action to prevent the holocaust puts him in the blackest moods. Indeed, Mr. Brown is never more in the American grain than when he is taking a dim view of politics and government—though I should add that his suspicion is expressed with much more sensitivity and sophistication than we are accustomed to nowadays.

Displaced persons tend also to be perfectionists whose displacement stems partly from the fact that they ask too much of life. Like Thoreau, they find it hard to understand how a man "can be satisfied to entertain an

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MARIA ANGELICA

(Excerpt from a missionary's letter)

"Maria Angelica is twelve. For a long time her mother knew the little girl had leprosy but she tried to keep it hidden, in horror of the day her daughter would be sent to the public leprosy camp.

"Last September neighbors insisted Maria be sent away. But because the leprosy camp is dreaded by all, Father X arranged to have the child enter the poor little leprosy colony we conduct here for Bishop Y.

"Maria screamed with terror when she first met the other victims of leprosy here. Actually they've been kindness itself to her. They remember what it was like for themselves in the beginning, before they found out that leprosy is curable . . ."

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opinion merely" and not act it out. Being perfectionists, they are troubled by pastoral visions. In D. H. Lawrence's pastoral the machines are wiped off the face of the earth and the handsome men are dressed "in close red trousers, bright red, an' little short white jackets," and they carve the stools they sit on. To enter the pastoral of Henry Miller "We need only to behave as brothers and sisters; follow our hearts, not our minds; play, not work; create and not add invention upon invention." For Mr. Brown "The way forward is the way back—back to the sunrise world where the first Eden was planted," where lovers can go swimming in a night ocean, where nuclear physics has been reduced to the level of stamp collecting, and where "five hundred years from now solemn children might still crash sweetfern in summer pastures."

Let us admit that we are all in varying degrees impelled by a similar vision. It is what makes Mr. Lobsenz' book possible, for the quest for pleasure in America is an aspect of our pastoral impulse, a materialization of our long-standing conviction that we are dispensed from an old time-bound order. The American Dream involves a quarrel with time, and in our pleasures we have the illusion of time stopped. Hence all our pleasures have a mythical dimension. Perhaps then the American Dream might be called the chronological heresy and presented to Mr. Standen for further observations.

BUT IN any event it is this pastoral impulse that we have to fear now. We cannot let our thinking get polarized between nuclear holocaust and an idyllic enjoyment of the sweet earth and its fruits. Mr. Brown, who takes religion so seriously, who writes so well about so many of our follies and self-deceptions, who knows how crucial it is that we realize that we are men, not gods, is ultimately, I believe, so polarized. Hence the leitmotif of despair that runs through his almanac. In his heart, I believe, he is convinced that we must choose between doom and Prospero's book, and he cannot imagine our Prospero drowning his book.

And indeed, how can our Prospero drown his book? If he ever got to the point where drowning it were a real possibility wouldn't it be simply because some semi-literate Caliban, with a mob of Trinculos and Stephanos cheering him on, had threatened to burn it if he didn't? Our Prospero must learn to live with his book. The trouble is not with the book but with the way it is read and the limited, hubristic vision of so many who try to apply its messages. "It's not that technical advance and increase of knowledge are simply bad, but that they are not simply good," says Mr. Brown. Indeed, they are not simply good; but may we not be in less danger from this lack of simple goodness than from a conviction that only simple goodness will do?

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THE SCREEN

Of Human Bondage

NOT SINCE the early thirties when Emil Jannings was driven to the depths by Marlene Dietrich's provocative Lola Lola in "The Blue Angel," and poor Leslie Howard almost lost everything due to his slavish infatuation for Bette Davis's scheming Mildred in Maugham's famous story, has a movie like "Lolita" turned up—with its vivid portrayal of the struggles and tortures of a man caught up in a degrading passion. Perhaps the main differences between the problems of the harassed men of the thirties and those of Humbert Humbert lie in the shocking aspects of Humbert's sexual attraction to twleve-year-old girls called nymphets and the fact that Vladimir Nabokov relates Humbert's story so brilliantly in an original novel that is more notable for its humor and satire than for its horror and sensationalism.

The movie, very well produced by James B. Harris and directed by Stanley Kubrick, is able to display some of Nabokov's wit, but much of it is actually in the writing; and, although author Nabokov also wrote the screenplay, he was not able to re-capture his own bright style or sly observations that give the book its mocking spirit. And as stunning as is the black-and-white photography of Oswald Morris, even it cannot catch the book's near-macabre comedy. MGM and Seven Arts, who are presenting the film, have made it clear in their advertisements that the picture is for persons over eighteen years of age, but I wish they hadn't used as the main line of their campaign the tag: "How did they ever make *Lolita*?" It's too easy—and accurate—to answer, "They didn't!" The shocker in the original novel is the twelve-year-old girl. In the movie, Lolita is played by newcomer Sue Lyon who was fourteen at the time and looks like a healthy, robust seventeen or eighteen.

Thanks to Kubrick's skillful direction, Miss Lyon plays the role extremely well—with just the right touches of calculated come-hither as if she knew every minute of the time what she was doing while snapping her bubble gum and driving helpless Humbert to distraction with her very presence. James Mason gives an amazing performance as Humbert, the visiting English lecturer who married Lolita's mother just to be near the girl, and then stays and stays after the mother's death to tour the country with his accessible Lo. Mason successfully combines Humbert's deadly seriousness in his pursuit of the girl, his ridiculous efforts to disguise his maneuvers, his naiveté when it's actually she who seduces him and eludes him later when she's fed up. He is perhaps funniest in the scenes with Lolita's widowed mother, scenes that are almost gruesome in a bluebeardish kind of way as he contrives to get rid of this affected slob whom he can hardly stand. Shelley Winters plays this obvious pain-in-the-neck with the right mixture of burlesque and poignancy. And Peter Sellers adds to the humor and irony of the whole absurd situation by turning up in a series of disguises that wouldn't really fool anyone but foolish, obsessed, middle-aged, ridiculously pathetic Humbert Humbert.

If one can forget the original novel, with its nymphet theme, which is practically dropped in the movie, and its bright burlesques of hypocrisy and sham, one can find "Lolita" an absorbing, well-acted film with many sharp cinematic comments made by director Kubrick. But can one forget a book as original as *Lolita*? Why should film makers consider all books and themes as grist for the movie mill?

THE ADVERTISEMENTS for "Boccaccio '70" (Embassy) describe this Italian picture as telling "three stories of the sexes which Boccaccio might have included in his Decameron for audiences of 1970." What producer Carlo Ponti forgets is that there is a great deal of difference between *telling* a story, as Boccaccio did in his famous collection which covers sex as well as other subject matters, and *visualizing* it, as producer Ponti does in this three-part movie. And if what we see is what we have to look forward to in 1970, heaven help us!

The first conte, "The Temptation of Dr. Antonio," is about a puritanical censor (Peppino De Filippo) who perceives vice and obscenity wherever he looks—and he often looks for it. He doesn't have to look too far when an enormous billboard is put up across from his apartment, with an enormous poster of enormous Anita Ekberg lying on a sofa and spilling out of her tight dress. Its caption reads "Drink More Milk." During his one-man campaign against the poster, this Dr. Antonio falls in love with Anita, who comes to life in his dreams and, still enormous, leads him on a merry chase. The poor guy goes completely mad. This subject of the sex-obsessed fanatic (see Maugham again in "Rain") has been done before, but it hardly seems fit material for such broad farce, especially when it ends in insanity. Or is Federico Fellini, who directed, trying to tell off censors who stepped on his "La Dolce Vita?" In any case, no episode of his lengthy film had the objectionable bad taste of this short.

The second and most moving and most Boccaccio-like tale, "The Job," was directed by Luchino Visconti who seems to have no ax to grind but is interested in pointing out the decadence of modern society. Set in a rich and beautifully-furnished apartment, it tells the story of a pretty wife (Romy Schneider) who discovers her playboy husband (Thomas Milian) has been carrying on with $1,000-a-night call girls. She makes a bet with her father who controls their finances that she can support herself for a year—and she proceeds at once to do

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so—by charging her husband at the same rates he pays elsewhere. "The Job" is not funny and not meant to be; and the final shot of the wife in bed awaiting her husband is extremely touching. If director Visconti hadn't allowed this section of the film to run so long, he might have made an almost perfect short.

The whole of "Boccaccio '70" is too long—as if each of its famous Italian directors couldn't be curtailed. (There was a fourth episode in the film, but this was curtailed by being cut out entirely.) The third and longest of the tales is directed by Vittorio De Sica and gives Sophia Loren plenty of opportunity to display her ample charms. As the prize in "The Raffle," she is won by a sexton who doesn't appeal to her at all when a handsome young farmer (Luigi Giulianni) starts hanging around. So Sophia gives the sexton all her raffle money and hopefully turns to the farmer. This is an old story and an old joke, but De Sica has spiced it up with sexy angles that will no doubt still be around in the 1970's—as this whole racy film may be. Wasn't it Texas Guinan who said: "Never give a sucker an even break?"

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

BOOKS

Paul Blanshard Rides Again, and Again and Again

Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal: An American Interpretation. By Paul Blanshard. Beacon Press. $3.95.

by Stanley Lichtenstein

EVERY TWO years or so since 1949, Paul Blanshard has published another book, making six in all during this period (seven, if we count the updated *American Freedom and Catholic Power* of 1958). Four have had the words "Catholic Power" in their titles. A fifth (*The Right to Read*) has dealt with censorship as influenced by various forces, including Catholicism. A sixth (*God and Man in Washington*), while dealing generally with church-state relationships on the American political scene, was advertised by Beacon Press under the headline "Should America Elect a Catholic President?" It is difficult to avoid the impression that Franco and Salazar are only incidentally the targets of the present work. The bull's-eye at which Mr. Blanshard aims is, as before, Catholicism.

By this time, his favorite theses—that Catholicism is theologically totalitarian, structurally akin to the Kremlin which it fights, and prone to making alliances with fascist dictators—have been iterated and reiterated. Certain chapter headings have become obligatory. "How the Hierarchy Works" (Chapter 2 of the 1949 book) has its parallel in "A Political Church at Work" (Chapter 3 of the current book); "Education and the Catholic Mind" (1949) becomes "Education in the Shadow of the Church" (1962); "Sex, Birth Control and Eugenics" and "Marriage, Divorce and Annulments" (1949) become "Sex, Marriage and Burial" (1962); "Censorship and Boycott" (1949) becomes "How the Censorship Works" (1962); and "The Catholic Plan for America" (1949) has its counterpart in "The Future of Clerical Fascism" (1962).

One can tell these books apart by their settings, not their ideas. The local color in *American Freedom and Catholic Power, The Irish and Catholic Power* and *Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal* is variegated. The historical backgrounds in each country are different, and Mr. Blanshard sketches them readably. In the current work, he acknowledges his debt to Madariaga, Bowers, numerous American and English writers, and even National Catholic Welfare Conference consultant Richard Pattee, whose works Mr. Blanshard found "eminently stimulating" and full of "very valuable" research.

But Mr. Blanshard's four months of "intensive interviewing" in Spain and Portugal in 1959, coupled with his "more than a casual glimpse of Republican Spain" during a 1933 visit, are dubious justification for the publication of another book in a heavily explored field. Some relatively new material—such as Mr. Blanshard's account of the trial of Pastor Nuñez for breaking police seals on the door of the Second Baptist Church in Madrid—is re-published here from *The Christian Century*. Topical references to events like Henrique Galvao's seizure of the Portuguese liner *Santa Maria* and the uprisings in Angola make portions of the book timely and interesting, but no more so than the newspapers and magazines from which Mr. Blanshard draws this material. His account of the Miracle of Fatima and his analysis of the political significance in the United States of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima will be provocative to some readers and provoking to others.

This reviewer, like Mr. Blanshard, detests Franco and Salazar, frowns on U.S. economic and military support of their regimes, and opposes religious establishments, particularly when accomplished through concordats with dictators. But "Catholic power" is hardly a sufficient explanation for the turn in American foreign policy with regard to Spain, and there is an unconscious irony in Mr. Blanshard's observation that Catholicism "tends to develop anti-Communism into a fanatical religious crusade, quite unbalanced in its single-devil emphasis . . ." Single-devil emphasis, indeed! If ever there was a "single-devil" approach to national and world problems, it is Mr. Blanshard's.

And even if we narrow our focus to the point of preoccupation with "clerical power," the picture is not so simple or one-sided as Mr. Blanshard paints it. "Heretics are not to be disputed with, but to be condemned unheard, and whilst they

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perish by fire, the faithful ought to pursue the evil to its source, and bathe their hands in [the ringleaders'] blood . . ." These words, though they sound like Blanshard quoting Torquemada to show the horrors of the Inquisition, were actually uttered by Martin Luther when he had become a successful revolutionary rather than a hunted heretic. He then proclaimed that "no secular prince can permit his subjects to be divided by the preaching of opposite doctrines." In his chapter on the Inquisition, Mr. Blanshard does allude to the burning of Servetus in 1533 as symbolizing "the common villainy of both Catholics and Protestants," adding: "Lest we feel self-righteous about American superiority, it should be remembered that nineteen residents of Salem Village, Massachusetts, were hanged for witchcraft in 1691."

Unfortunately, this is Mr. Blanshard's only serious admission in the book that Protestant "power" may ever have been a problem, and he seems to imply that the witch-hanging spirit of Protestants died with the victims of 1691. This, of course, is not true. In nineteenth-and twentieth-century America, Catholic and Jewish children have sometimes been subjected to corporal punishment or other harsh discipline for refusing to participate in Protestant exercises in public schools, seventh-day Sabbath observers have been prosecuted and fined for violation of Sunday laws, important government posts have been reserved for Protestants only, and white-Protestant supremacy has been a working principle in many areas. The Supreme Court has been criticized by Protestant leaders, conservative and liberal alike, for passages in recent decisions which uphold government and public school religious neutrality as opposed to the traditional Christian (and characteristically Protestant) orientation. Some Baptists and Lutherans steadfastly introduce and re-introduce into Congress the so-called "Christian Amendment" for establishing Christianity as the government-sponsored religion. In addition, Protestants like Gerald L. K. Smith and the Rev. Billy James Hargis are active in fascistic or extreme right-wing movements to save the country from "Communism." Certainly there is much in the contemporary scene, as well as in the stories of Luther, Calvin and Knox, to make one wonder whether "Protestantism," "democracy" and "separation of church and state" are really the interchangeable terms Mr. Blanshard seems to think they are.

But let us not confuse Mr. Blanshard with facts. His growing tendency to assume that his critics are Catholics or followers of "the Catholic line" has reached a point where he gets his labels mixed up, as illustrated by a footnote in which he refers to "a Catholic writer" named John W. White, author of *Our Good Neighbor Hurdle,* "a blistering and biased attack on Protestant missions." Mr. White, an old-time New York *Times* correspondent in Latin America, is, in fact, a Protestant. Mr. Blanshard's characteristic error brings to mind a McCarthy-era joke involving a street rally, an anti-Communist bystander, and an arresting policeman. In an appropriate switch, the joke would go like this:

Bystander: "But Mr. Blanshard, I'm not a Catholic, I'm a non-Catholic."

Mr. Blanshard: "I don't care what kind of a Catholic you are, come along with me."

Whimsical Satire of Man and His World

Sylva. By Vercors. Putnam. $4.

by Alice Ellen Mayhew

VERCORS (the pen name of Jean Brüller) has returned solidly to form in this whimsical but essentially serious satire of man and the world he's made. As in *You Shall Know Them,* he uses animals to point up our world *manqué* and to posit the grandeur and burdens of the human condition which can be evaded but not erased. *Sylva* is perhaps the most interesting of Vercors' work to date, a novel in the existentialist tradition, where the intellect and the will are seen as joined in each man's individual, moral, humanizing effort; where each man's quality of soul is determined not by what he is but by what he is seeking to become.

The narrator of the story is an English country squire who, in a turnabout of that popular novel of the twenties, *Lady into Fox,* which he has just read, finds on his lawn a fox bitch who has assumed the form of an eighteen-year-old girl. Middle-class England—all laws and civilized regulations, good manners and breeding—is confronted with a creature in a state as pure as that prevailing on the day after the first mutations, without ancestors and without a social environment, brand-new from its animality.

Sylva, the forest creature, is a wild animal whom Richwick slowly and hilariously tames into domesticity. At first he wants to keep her wild, and when, foxlike, she reacts to the call of Spring by advancing on him, he feels he must resist the call of the wild within himself, the creature deep in him that has been silenced by civilization and thought. But Sylva's attempts to run from the burdens of civilized life back to the jungle are futile. The forest rejects her. Richwick then knows that it would be a betrayal to abandon her to her instincts, a fool's paradise; he must help her become a woman even if she has to suffer for it.

With the help of a nursemaid and a local doctor who hopes to learn how things began to happen in the dim brain of the first man, he commences to guide her through the progressions to higher life. With setbacks here and there, Sylva abandons the unconscious, the instinctual, the sure, for the conscious, the self-conscious, the *un*sure. The first sign is tears, the memory of pain. Next, Sylva must learn that she exists. Her own sight in the mirror is terrifying but at last she recognizes that this thing, this image is she, and that Sylva is therefore a separate being from all others, "a thing quite alone and apart which existed . . . irremediably." This is the beginning of the reflective intelligence, the *cogito.* Now half-animal, half-human, she begins to recognize other objects and to join words and images.

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In the meantime, however, Sylva's mating instincts have to be put down and Richwick ponders how to instill in her, if not a sense of sin, at least a semblance of modesty. She was absolutely devoid of those "dark nooks and crannies in which the human being hides away his impure or odious impulses . . . we would have to build up against her appetites some of those foolproof impediments which at times no doubt are conducive to neuroses, but without which she would go on behaving with the innocent, savage shamelessness that foiled all efforts to civilize her."

Having discovered herself and the rest of the world of objects she makes lateral progress, discovering the tool (cause and effect), and superstition, the talisman or magic object. Her vocabulary increases but does not deepen; abstraction is still beyond her. And she can not love, though the instincts for mating have broadened to affection. Then she discovers death. Her dog dies and Richwick buries it. Sylva learns then that if the "dog will play no more," then one day Richwick and finally she herself will play no more. She flies once more from this terrible truth to the forest of the perennial present, toward the now impossible refuge of her lost unconscious. But now she is one of us; she has discovered our common misery and thus, "communed with us in this mortal frailness, with all her being. Human love differs from that of the beasts in that it has death for a background."

Sylva has surrendered her unconscious and must now share the indecisiveness of human judgments. For her innate knowledge she gets back the possibility of choice. With the gates open, laughter and love (still unrecognized), words and ideas, the abstract, the necessity to will, the need to understand—all come flooding in. She asks Richwick some embarrassing metaphysical questions about why we exist and what we are and, when he can not answer them, she concludes with paralyzing simplicity, "Why, we know nothing." But, as the smaller areas of her ignorance challenge her attention, she forgets her concern with the essentials. In the world of practical detail, she loses sight of our common, shared ignorance, men's ignorance as such. "In short, her mind passed, in next to no time, from the anguished fears of the Stone Age, to the calm certainties of our modern British civilization."

Sylva's emergence from the unconscious is counterpointed by Dorothy, Richwick's one-time love, who is defeated by life and who takes refuge in drugs and animality. As Sylva painfully extricates herself from bestial unconciousness and raises Richwick to his own human destiny, Dorothy is sinking back into that mire, seeking in it a cowardly oblivion, and trying to drag Richwick with her.

In this book, Vercors seems to be saying that life is order and must be an assertion of the will. Our defeats are proof of the violence of the struggle, but it is always possible to achieve through pain and courage alone. The surrender of the will is the suicide of our humanity and the world is dense with intellectual cabbages.

Philosophic Survey

God, Man and the Thinker. By Donald A. Wells. Random House. $8.95.

by Walter Edward Arnold, Jr.

THE CURIOUS reader will be glad to know that *God, Man and the Thinker* is finite. It is in fact designed as a text for a college course in the philosophy of religion. Professor Wells is chairman of the philosophy department at Washington State University and is also an ordained minister. His sumptuously produced book presents not a new theory of religion but rather a broad survey of the views of representative thinkers, both classic and modern, on various central problems of religious experience. Professor Wells' approach is pluralistic, in the spirit of William James and his style, as admirably lucid as James' is indeed well suited to the purposes of his book.

For the author, the fundamental question that philosophy puts to religion is that of truth; it is the old question, How does Reason judge Faith? This question, which the philosopher as such seeks primarily to illumine, Professor Wells opposes to the questions of the origins of religion and of religion's effect on society, though he does not neglect consideration of the latter. His approach to religion is primarily intellectual, even though in this book he does not commit himself to any particular doctrinal position.

God, Man and the Thinker can be divided into two sections, the first comprised of those chapters which deal with the general questions of the nature of religion, the idea of God and the status of religious knowledge itself. The second section, which makes up the greater part of the book, is comprised of chapters which consider the special problems that arise from a religious view of life, such as the problem of natural evil, the question of fixed or evolving religions and the relation between psychology and religion. Professor Wells' task is twofold: (1) To choose the questions which anyone who examines religion critically must ask, and (2) to indicate the kinds of answers which individual thinkers have given.

Professor Wells does not, for example, attempt to define religion. Rather, as he says, "We shall always know what (religion) is for the person who defines it. Philosophically, this is all we need to know." Such an approach is practically the only possible one in a text meant for a variously committed audience. Even so, the book has been rather more successful in its second task than in its first. So far as its fairness in representing the views of others is concerned, it is beyond reproach. But, in my opinion, *God, Man and the Thinker* must stand trial on a more serious charge than that of either special pleading or lack of originality.

The approach in this book is frankly problematic, rather than historical. There can be no quarrel with the fundamental rightness of that approach in such a survey. What seems to me the most serious flaw of the book is that the problems which it considers seem to be of very little interest to the religiously concerned

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person of today. One gets no sense of the confused yet promising situation of the contemporary thinker. The very prominence of a chapter on the "problem of inerrant scripture" shows the book's irrelevance to the question of religious truth as it is now posed. Certainly the problems it does deal with are not the ones uppermost when the best philosophical thinkers of today ponder religion. Professor Wells' categories are simply too general and his statement of the questions too abstract to be of any lasting interest to the professional philosopher. It is one of the curiosities, and perhaps one of the blessings of a radically pluralistic culture, that the first book in a brand new series of texts should be fifty years behind the times.

Canaday on Art

Embattled Critic: Views on Modern Art. By John Canaday. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $4.50.

by Betty Kaufman

AMONG ART critics, John Canaday is an excellent journalist. While this remark is not meant primarily as a compliment, it is certainly not a complaint either; it is the result of a painstaking effort to be exact. Whatever is the function of a critic (and there seems to be a good deal of argument about that) his tools are words and he must express himself in writing. Mr. Canaday has chosen a form of literary expression perfectly suited to his gifts—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say his gifts compel him to journalistic expression.

The appearance of *Embattled Critic* might lead one to expect an exposition in depth of his views. That is not the case. The book is simply a collection of Canaday's articles for the N.Y. *Times* and the magazine *Horizon*, with slight emendations; they are lively and challenging, but they never explain or substantiate the views they toss into the ring.

The points that he has to make are stated briefly, because, although many of them may be perfectly valid, it is not congenial to Canaday to subject them to intense or thoughtful attention. An example of this is his contention that commercialism, status-seeking and sensationalism are rife in the American art world today; even if one agrees with this notion, it is not particularly an idea which would gain in force by profound scrutiny and elaboration —on the contrary, the more succinct and glancing the blow the more effective. A journalistic statement is the best one that Mr. Canaday can make on the subject because when he does elaborate, he weakens his argument.

"A generation of hard work by colleges and other institutions in devising effective art appreciation courses and the skillful adoption of high-pressure publicity techniques by museums has certainly enlarged the knowledgeable audience for painting" he is driven to noting. "But," he goes on, "it has also encouraged the production of spurious work by lifting art in this country from the status of something half suspect to the status of something accepted blindly as worthwhile." These sentences follow one another in a very amusing chapter-article (amusing on other grounds) entitled "The Telephone Mystery"; on the face of it they may seem to form a non sequitur, but this is only due to Canaday's temperament. He is certainly intelligent, so on re-consideration he modifies his position; he believes in his original point, however, so he throws it hastily back in without the transitional explanation that another writer might have devised. As John Richardson has said, Canaday "never provides the reasoned exposé of his views which might —or again might not—justify them" and that he seems to be essentially "an old-fashioned controversialist."

An even more striking example of Canaday's impatient and rhetorical procedure is his so-called 'attack' on abstract expressionism, which led to a barrage of letters to the *Times*, one of which appears here in an appendix. At various times he has suggested that the success of abstract expressionism was built on fraud and gullibility, that its nature allows for exceptional tolerance of incompetence and deception, and that abstract art as a whole is a hollow

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decorative style that lacks the substance of universal and humanistic values. On the other hand, he has said that he was not speaking of the serious and dedicated artists who are the movement's leading spirits, mildly concluding that "purely abstract art has been in the ascendant long enough now for its original fans to be ready to question it, and for its purely spectator audience to weary of it." In the end he only seems to mean that there has been *enough* abstract art, expressionist and otherwise. While his remarks are interesting and provocative (and may even be sound), he has never taken the trouble to prove his points. He has been much admired in some circles for taking an "unfashionable view," but the real question about that view has never been settled: it may be unfashionable, but is it true? In any case, what is it based on?

(In Chapter I of *Embattled Critic*) Canaday appears to blame the profession of art criticism for what he has chiefly denounced in contemporary art—the hegemony of abstact expressionism. One might expect to find out here just what Mr. Canaday stands for as an art critic, but one reads that the critic should make sure "that what he writes (and talks) is after-the-fact judgment on what the artist creates" because otherwise he is leading the artist on to create to please the critic instead of from "a truly profound response to life." Apparently Mr. Canaday is really lecturing himself, for although a critic by his very nature is chiefly a commentator, a translator, an elucidator, Canaday is himself an example of those critics who assume a futher function. He appears to believe strongly in an esthetic ideal (a humanistic one, as far as one can make out) which he usually exhorts the artist to strive for, urging him not to listen to those who by simply analyzing, admiring or describing what he does are guilty of encouraging him to go on creating in his own un-humanistic way. It really seems as if Canaday, in this article, was asking art critics in general to be more irresponsible than ever, while giving elsewhere and *usually* the impression that what art criticism lacks is a sense of responsibility and sense of values—such as he himself has—which would make them dismiss most contemporary work as antics suitable for "an amusement park."

What makes Canaday outstanding is his lively journalistic prose and the enthusiasm and boldness of his statements; but those very qualities are antipathetic to analysis or illumination. There is more heat than logic in his argument about contemporary art and more drama than substance in his views.

Postcard Sanctity

The Penitent. By Pietro DiDonato. Hawthorn. $3.95.

by Thomas P. McDonnell

THE PROBLEM of sanctity is so special a bafflement to the modern writer, to say nothing of our general estrangement from its seemingly ineffable milieu, that the attempt to record it, if made at all, usually ends in disaster. At least, that is to say, in literary disaster. It is much like the movies you see which attempt to portray lives of genius in the creative arts. The result is invariably a production in *kitsch.* But if the creative life eludes the cinematic process, how much more the mystery of sanctity escapes the spectrum, from confinement to liberation, of the written word.

This is the problem faced, though not squarely confronted, by Pietro DiDonato in *The Penitent,* an account of the spiritual transformation of Alessandro Serenelli after his murder of the child-saint, Maria Goretti, in 1902. As a sketch of the relatively "unknown" Allessandro, *The Penitent* has a certain undeniable interest. But it falters rather seriously in its mere idealization of Maria Goretti. In saying this, of course, one proceeds on the assumption that authentic sanctity is the rarest phenomenon which man may encounter, not the commonest nor the one most easily dramatized in emotive states of "Christian" enthusiasm. What is remarkable about St. Thérèse, for example, is that she penetrated the bourgeois-pietism

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with which she is still identified. One suspects that a kind of pisan-pietism has aready become for Maria Goretti the popular myth which hides the mystery of her sanctity.

Some support for this opinion may be seen in the fact, if it is one, that Alessandro Serenelli seems more real to us than Maria Goretti, and never so real as in the long "Author's Note" which concludes the book. One would have wished, then, that DiDonato had altogether forsaken the ersatz fictional/biographical method for a presentation that would not so much presume on the sophomoric attitudes of the reader. In later years, Serenelli deplored the journalistic distortions of certain aspects of the case in which he was the principal figure. DiDonato has done well to have helped correct errors of judgment that have remained in the public(ity) domain for over sixty years, but this in itself does not quite cancel out his novelist's predilection for mere melodrama.

There is, of course, a place to be sought in the landscape of the soul, which lies somewhere between the extremes of postcard sanctity and that of the madness-and-malnutrition school of ascetic art. It is not with a wholly pedagogical concern, therefore, that one puts down *The Penitent* in the uneasy conviction that the story still remains to be told. Although this is not postcard biography by any means, it is nevertheless clear that Alessandro Serenelli remains within a mystery of sanctity that cannot be penetrated by "religious" *kitsch*. It is, regrettably, hard to believe that the author of *Christ in Concrete* also produced this venture in *Reader's Digest* hagiography.

REVIEWERS

Stanley Lichtenstein was research and press relations director for P.O.A.U. until he broke with the organization at the beginning of 1958.

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Thomas P. McDonnell, a poet and critic, is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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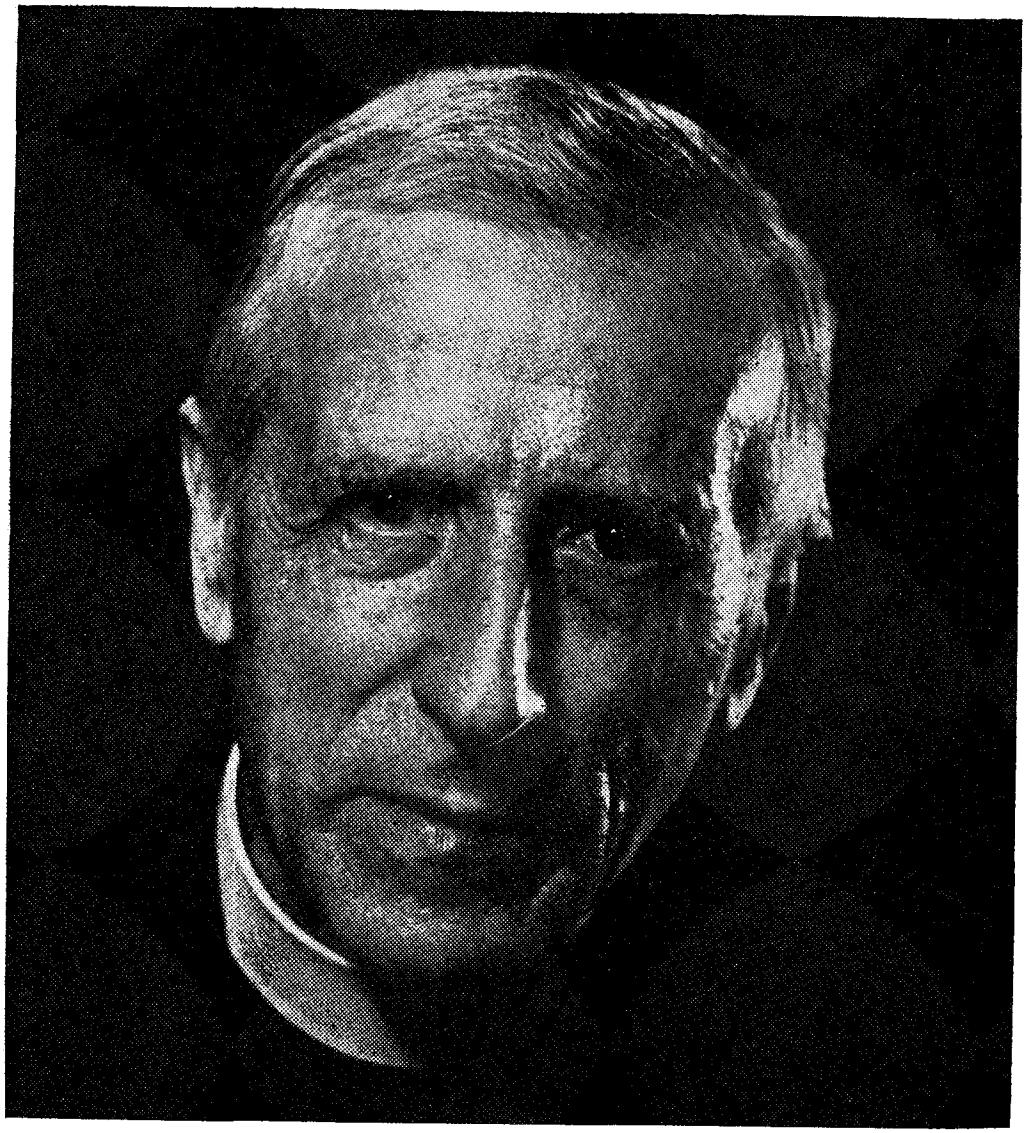

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